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Thoughts and Suggestions Submitted to the Society of Friends. 2d ed.

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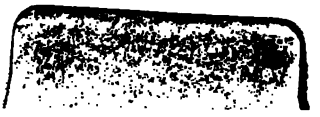

# THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS

SUBMITTED TO

## THE CONSIDERATION

OF

## The Society of Friends.

SECOND EDITION.

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## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

HAVING read the following pages (previous to revision) to a company of more than fifty Friends, members of Dublin Monthly Meeting, a desire was expressed by several that I should print them, in order to give an opportunity for examining them more carefully. I yield to this desire, from a deep conviction of the importance of correct Scriptural views on the various topics on which I have ventured to touch; and now submit them to a wider circle of my friends, with the assurance of much personal esteem for many whom I have the privilege of knowing, and with a desire that the views which I have put forward, may have weight only so far as they may appear in accordance with "the oracles of God."

I should add, that, having been rather hastily written, I have, since the occasion referred to, made sundry alterations and additions. I would say also, that although no objection to what I read was expressed, I do not hold any of my friends who were then present, responsible for any portion of my communication.

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

The preceding lines will apprise the reader of the origin of this address. I am thankful to have received many testimonies of concurrence with its general import from several much esteemed Friends; but I should acknowledge that with these expressions of approval, I have also received sundry critical remarks, pointing out what appeared obscure or open to objection. Of these remarks I have gladly availed myself, in the corrections which I have made in this edition.

I am aware that I have touched upon points on which sincere and devout Christians may and do differ in opinion. I desire therefore merely to submit what I have brought forward as matter for calm and prayerful consideration, and for friendly interchange of opinion amongst those who love, and desire to serve the same blessed Lord and Saviour. I trust in doing so, I may not be regarded as stepping out of my own proper sphere.

Whilst "speaking the truth in love," and communing together over those things that relate to our common salvation, may our spirits be deeply imbued with the lovely temper pictured in those beautiful lines of the Apostle—"With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

H. B.

*DUBLIN, 11 Mo., 1859.*

# THOUGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

MUCH interest is manifested by the Society of Friends for the welfare of its members. The great majority of those who could be expected to attend its meetings, which are held every month, every quarter, and every year, for the administration of its discipline, do attend. The amount of time, attention, travelling, and money which is involved in the attendance of these meetings, and in carrying out the internal economy of the Society in other respects, is very large indeed;—probably, in proportion to numbers, far beyond what any other community of Christians expends for like objects; and yet, notwithstanding all this expenditure, there is a general complaint that things are in a low state.

If I have any right feelings, you cannot suppose me to look on with indifference. Our sympathies *ought* to be drawn out for each other's welfare, and that, doubtless, much more deeply than is the case. But however far I fall short in this respect, I trust it was feelings of Christian love which led me, as you are aware, nearly two years ago, to submit to you some thoughts bearing on those subjects which so much *engage* your own minds. What I then

communicated was so kindly received, and such a friendly and cordial spirit has since been manifested, when numbers of us have met together to speak of the things concerning the kingdom of God, that I feel encouraged to throw before you a few additional thoughts and suggestions.

Now let me say in the outset, that although I do not deny that things may not be in a vigorous or flourishing condition, yet if Friends be aroused to make use of the resources and means within their reach, I am very far from thinking that there is ground for giving way to the feelings of discouragement which I hear so often expressed. There is one fact which I would regard as of a peculiarly encouraging character. Friends, as far as I learn from intercourse with them, are not content that things should remain in a low and relaxed state. They are not indulging in self-complacency. They do not deny that the world, the flesh and the enemy have too much prevailed over them. They are not content to remain as they are. A want is felt and freely acknowledged, and many minds, it appears to me, are inquiring—Is there not a remedy? Now if this be so, as I believe it is, I would look forward with much hopefulness that we should see better and brighter days.

Before giving any suggestions of my own, allow me to refer to a reply which I have frequently heard given to the question as to what is wanted. "*Individual faithfulness*" is the brief answer which is commonly given to this important question. This is a truism, I admit; but I do not see the depth of wisdom *exhibited in* stopping short with this hackneyed

expression, which we often hear uttered with much assurance, as if it set the matter at rest—leaving no room for further inquiry—although, in reality, it does not touch the question at issue. It only varies the form of expression. Such an answer does not help us in the least. It leaves us where it finds us; for the question still remains—How are we, under the Divine blessing, to be stirred up to "individual faithfulness"? We must look deeper. Let us remember that *faithfulness* springs from *faith*. To be *faithful*, we must be *full of faith*. How then are we to be full of faith? What light does Scripture throw upon this question? The Apostle says, "Faith cometh by hearing;" that is, we must hear a thing before we believe it: and secondly, "Hearing cometh by the word of God;" that is, through the message—through the spoken or recorded word of God.

From whence, then, is the remedy to come? If there is to be a revival, whence are we to look for it? Probably you would say, and say with decision—"From the Lord." With all my heart and soul I receive this word. It is from the Lord, and the Lord alone, that a revival can come. This, too, is a truism, which I receive without any qualification. If there be any revival amongst Friends, or amongst others, it must come from the Lord. It must be through the power of the Spirit working upon souls.

But supposing no revival comes, what are we to conclude? Are we to say, It is because the Lord has withheld the needed grace? Are we to say that we were ready, and anxious, and earnest to receive a living and life-giving stream of divine bless-

ing, but that God was not ready to give it? Now, in like manner, I doubt not, with the whole heart and soul, you would join me in repudiating such a thought. If no revival come, we must not—cannot charge it upon God, but upon ourselves. God works through the voluntariness of the human will, and through human instrumentality. Therefore, while I say with reverence, that God is ready and willing to perform *His* part, I say also, if no revival come, it is because *we* are not ready and willing to perform *ours*. It is for this reason, that, although God, in His grace, has put certain means within our reach, *we are not inclined to make use of them.*

Now, my dear Friends, would that I could encourage you to have more faith in God! Let me encourage you to cherish and enjoy the belief that God delighteth in blessing His people—that it is the joy of His heart to receive unto Himself. Nothing is more cheering and strengthening than to go on with such a thought. Do be persuaded to look away from yourselves and your own failings and infirmities unto Him. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." Only take the humble and believing place, and use the means which He expects you to use, and there is no limit to the blessing which may be poured out upon you. You may count upon God being faithful. "He cannot deny Himself."

I may perhaps not unfitly allude, in passing, to what has taken place in America within the last twelve months. There has been, as you know, a revival there—a genuine work of the Lord in hundreds, and thousands, and tens of thousands of *souls.* It is estimated that 500,000 persons have

been received into communion by various Christian Churches. And if only a tithe of that number have been truly and savingly converted to God within such a short period, it must be acknowledged to be a revival of an extraordinary character. How then has it taken place? By persons sitting down with their hands before them, as if man were a mere machine? No, far from it. The accounts which we have received, represent it as taking place through the energy of Christians who had faith in God, and who abounded in prayer, and who honoured His written Word, and made it the subject-matter of simple exposition and earnest exhortation—of Christians who acknowledged in their inmost souls that all power was from God, but who, notwithstanding, gave their whole selves to the Lord's work, as the channels of Divine blessing to others. It has been with this American revival as with others in other ages and places. *Means have been diligently used in dependence upon the Lord, and the Lord's blessing has rested upon them.*

There is another feature of the American revival which may render it peculiarly interesting and encouraging to Friends. It has not been a movement on the part of the clergy, but in many places almost, if not altogether independent of them. The power of the Lord has been so manifest, according to His sovereign will, in choosing instruments little esteemed in the eyes of men, that not only denominational, but ecclesiastical differences have been merged into something like Pentecostal unity.

We have sometimes to lament meeting with a condition of soul of a very opposite character to that which has marked the American revival. We find

an indisposedness to be disturbed—a reluctance to have established usages brought to the test of the Divine standard—an unwillingness to inquire or examine whether there is anything wrong. If you refer to Scripture as throwing additional light upon some point of doctrine or practice, a restlessness is exhibited, and a desire manifested to get rid of the subject as quickly as possible. Such persons wish to be let alone, without the trouble of examining whether their views are right or wrong. If Scripture is quoted, their apathy is vindicated, perhaps, by the observation, "Oh! I don't like controversy."

Now, a controversial spirit is always to be deprecated. It tends rather to starve the soul than to feed it. But injurious as it may be to the tone of the spirit, unless conducted in communion with God, the storm of theological strife is better than the stagnation and stillness of death. The love of ease and indifference to error, are not to be commendably cloaked under the profession of an amiable dislike of controversy.

The fact is, such persons have commonly derived their views from the teachings of men, and not from the examination of Holy Scripture. Were they under Divine teaching, and desirous of growing in the knowledge of divine things, there would be a willingness to learn and examine, and to receive instruction from whatever quarter it might come.

In what I propose saying to you, I do not pretend that I bring forward anything that is new—at least new to many of you. I rather seek to illustrate and enforce some old truths, and to encourage in their *application*.

I would first draw your attention to a fundamental principle, which I have on other occasions brought before you—that the Lord carries on His work in the soul *by the agency of the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the truth.* It appears to me so important to have clear views on this subject, immediately connected as it is with all spiritual life and growth, that I would, even at the risk of being thought a little tedious, enlarge again on the subject.

I have said, God works by the Holy Spirit through the truth. The Spirit is the power which applies: the truth is that which He applies to the soul. We must not separate these two things. If we do, we make a sad mistake—a mistake productive of incalculable mischief; and yet, it is a mistake which has been often made.

Thus, it is maintained by not a few at the present day, that a man believes the Gospel independently of Divine power—that it is only necessary to demonstrate to him its fitness, and its reasonableness, for him to receive it as he receives any natural truth. Now this doctrine, which has many adherents, virtually denies the corruption of human nature, and the depravity and alienation from God of the human will. Man is not thereby humbled, as he must be when a truly spiritual work is wrought in his soul. Profession takes the place of possession, and the whole structure rests on a sandy foundation.

Others, on the other hand, speak as if the work in the soul was carried on by the Spirit independently of the truth. This position is, as I judge,

equally erroneous, and altogether contrary to the teachings of Holy Scripture.

Against the first of these errors, I have only to refer you to two or three passages whose testimony appears to me decisive. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John vi. 44.) Again—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Again—"Except a man be born of . . . the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii. 5.)

I need not dwell more on this point, knowing that every one in the room would repudiate such a doctrine.

As to the position, that the Spirit of God does not carry on His *ordinary* work of grace in souls independently of instrumentality, but by means of the truth, I apprehend we shall find the testimony of Scripture equally clear and explicit. Let us first look at the historic *facts* of the New Testament, and then at its *doctrines*, as they respectively bear on the subject.

Is not all ministry based upon this principle—that the Spirit operates on the soul through the word preached? If the knowledge of the truth were not needful, why should our Lord have told his disciples to "preach the gospel *to every creature*"? He was in this respect, as in every other, the great and bright example of his people; for he was himself incessantly engaged in preaching. If ministry were needless, why should he have been so engaged? And why should he have sent forth,

first the twelve and afterwards the seventy, instructing them as to what they should say? When leaving his disciples, he tells them, in accordance with the text already quoted, that they should be witnesses unto him in proclaiming the truth, "both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts. i. 8.) The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles show how faithfully and fully these instructions were carried out. The truth made known by the living voice was used by the Spirit for the conversion of souls, and we read of none having been converted without it.

So far, then, for the testimony of the *historic* narratives, which, I submit, plainly demonstrate the place which outward means hold in the divine economy. What light, let us in the next place inquire, do we derive from the *doctrines* of the New Testament on the subject? Does not the parable of the sower teach us that it is *the word spoken*, and *heard, and received*, that is the germ of life and fruitfulness in the soul? In Colossians it is called, "*The word of the truth of the gospel*, which is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit." (ch. i. 5, 6.) James calls it "the engrafted," or implanted, "word which is able to save your souls." (ch. i., 21.) Again: does not the eighteenth verse of the same chapter plainly declare that God does not effect His work in the soul independently of the truth, but by means of the truth? "Of his own will begat he us *by the word of truth*." And again, in 2 Thess. ii. 13, we have a very explicit testimony to the conjunction of the Spirit and the truth, *the power and the instrument* in the work of salvation—

"God hath chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*"

The next subject to which I would draw your attention, relates to the confusion of ideas with regard to the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit, which we meet with among many Christians. Such persons do not clearly distinguish between the work wrought out *for us*, and the work to be wrought out *in us;* and, consequently, they do not distinguish between deliverance from *the guilt* of sin, and deliverance from *the inworking* of sin. They do not distinguish between a work which is perfected, and "perfected for ever" by the cross of Calvary, (Heb. x. 14,) and a work which is progressive—which should be always advancing as long as we are in this life, inasmuch as we should be always growing in likeness to Christ.

This is very far from being an unimportant and too nice distinction. It is, on the contrary, of immense importance, and most practical in its bearing. From the confusion to which I refer, arises uncertainty—weakness—want of peace—and want of decision. The soul does not rest on Christ in quietness and assurance, and therefore has not liberty and joy in his happy service.

We must carefully distinguish, I say, between deliverance from *the guilt* of sin, and deliverance from *the inworking* of sin.

There can be no true peace with God until we are delivered from *the guilt* of sin. There can be no true peace with God until the question between Him *as a Judge*, and ourselves *as unpardoned sinners*, has been *settled. Forgiveness* of sins lies at the very threshold

of the Christian's course. It is set before us as the first of all blessings, which we receive from "the God of all grace." I may want, and do want many things; but the first thing which I require, and without which nothing can be enjoyed, is the forgiveness of past transgressions. Accordingly, we find forgiveness of sins presented to us as the first thing which the Gospel announces. Let us look, as an illustration, to the words at the beginning and at the close of Luke's Gospel. In the first chapter we read, John the Baptist's mission was to prepare the way of the Lord, by giving the "knowledge of salvation unto his people, *by the remission of their sins:*" (ch. i., 77.) and at the close, according to our Lord's own words, "Repentance and *remission of sins,*" are to "be preached in his name among all nations." (ch. xxiv., 47.) And this was the commission which was carried out by the Apostles. "Repent ye," says Peter, on the day of Pentecost, "and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for *the remission of sins.*" (Acts ii. 38.) And again: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your *sins may be blotted out.*" (Acts iii. 19.) Again: "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive *remission of sins.*" (ch. x., 43.) And again: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you *the forgiveness of sins:* and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (ch. xiii., 38, 39.)

Now, I am persuaded that many make a great and lamentable mistake on this subject. They derive their notions from human opinions and theories, and *not* from Divine teaching. They think that

the forgiveness of sins is to be obtained only after a long, tedious process of self-denial and good works —a protracted course of spiritual exercises and attainments; and some will say, as the Church of Rome does, that even in the end, no one can be sure whether he is forgiven or not—that the question is still a matter of uncertainty. This, my friends, is not the religion of the New Testament: this is not the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It mistakes the ground of forgiveness altogether, in making it depend, *as the basis on which it rests*, either on the work of the Spirit within us, or on the works which we ourselves may be enabled to perform. For the fruit of the Spirit in us, and the works which we may be enabled to perform, are *the consequence, not the cause*, of our justification before God: they are *the results* of our acceptance, but in no wise do they form *the ground or reason* for which we are accepted.

Many, also, think it is presumption to believe one's sins forgiven. This view arises from the same error. It arises from viewing forgiveness as based on great attainments and deep spiritual experience; and that, therefore, to believe in the forgiveness of sins, is to lay claim to such attainments and experience. Let us examine this a little. Was the paralytic man presumptuous in believing the Lord when he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"? (Matt. ix. 2.) Was the poor sinner in the seventh of Luke presumptuous in going away in peace, notwithstanding all her many iniquities, when the Lord had said to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee. . . . Thy *sins are forgiven*." And are *we* presumptuous in

believing that the message which God sends to us is true—"*He that believeth shall receive remission of sins*"? (Acts x. 43.) Are *we* presumptuous in believing the word of Him who cannot lie—"*All that believe are justified from all things*"? (Acts xiii. 39.)* No, surely not. But, if the forgiveness of those who do really believe, is thus made as certain as the word of the living God can make it, is not presumption rather chargeable on those who dare to reject that word—who dispute God's authority, and deny His grace, in granting a free and full and immediate forgiveness of sins to those who give the Lord Jesus Christ the glory which he has earned as "THE SAVIOUR of sinners"?

Alas! my friends, those who reject this precious truth, incur a terrible responsibility in daring to corrupt or cloud that Gospel, which is the manifestation of the Divine character, and which proclaims forgiveness to every poor sinner, however numerous his transgressions, who comes with a broken and believing heart to receive it from his Saviour.

This mistake arises, as I have said, from not remembering *the ground* of the forgiveness of sins—from not remembering that it is *the death of Christ alone* that puts away sin—that it is *his blood alone* that washes from sin—that it is *his sacrificial death* on the cross that is an atonement or expiation for sin; and that as soon as the sinner, no matter how multitudinous his sins may have been, places his trust in the saving virtue of that blood, God pardons and accepts him for Jesus' sake.†

* See also 1 John ii. 12; and v. 13.

† For further illustration of the doctrine of Scripture on this subject, the reader is referred to a pamphlet entitled "The Cross".

Pardon is thus to be obtained, not by what *I can do*, but through faith in what *another has done for me*. The invitation is as free to the greatest of sinners as to the least, to come to Jesus, and at once enjoy this perfect forgiveness. And let me add: we often find in the New Testament, that it is the great and notorious sinners who come to Jesus, and receive a full forgiveness; whilst those who did not feel the burden of their sins never partake of this blessing.

How simple and instructive is the narrative of the gospels! However deep and desperate were the diseases of those who came to the blessed Lord, as soon as they touched him—nay, as soon as they touched the very hem of his garment, they were made perfectly whole! Beautiful type of what takes place in the spiritual world, when we bring to him our greater spiritual wants and necessities! It is impossible to come into contact with the Son of God, the Divine Saviour, acting in grace, without receiving from him saving virtue. It is a question of the greatness, not of *our* ailments, but of *his* healing power.

How striking, too, are the types of Christ in the Old Testament! As many as looked to the brazen serpent, lived. A look was life! As many as put the blood on the lintel and the door-posts, were protected and secured from judgment. As many as were in the ark, (another type of Christ,) were perfectly safe; for they were in that refuge which God

a Treatise on the Death of Christ," price 3d.; and also to an abridgment of a most interesting work, written more than three hundred years ago, by Aonio Paleario, of Milan, entitled "The Benefit of the Death of Christ," price 1d. Both may be had, through *the post, from the Publishers*, on remitting four postage stamps.

had provided for their salvation. And not less secure are those who are *in Christ;* for, "There is no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus,*" "*in whom* we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Rom. viii. 1; Eph. i. 7.)

Now, my friends, every one in this room is in one or other of two conditions. He is either *in Christ,* or *he is not.* He is either *in his sins,* or he *has received forgiveness of sins* through faith in Christ. We may not know how it is with each other. I condemn the presumption of judging one another where we have no evidence. We know not what is working within many a heart. We little know the secret exercises of soul, or the simple, child-like faith of many with whom we mingle in society. Life is often very feeble in the soul; and that life may be overlain with a vast quantity of human rubbish, and restrained by the antagonistic usages of society. But how often are we delighted to find a cordial response where, perhaps, we least expected it!

But while I thus condemn pronouncing judgment as to the state of others before God, who alone seeth the heart, I must say, that divine life in our souls ought to be so distinctly and fully manifested, that it would be obvious to others that we "had been with Jesus." The "calling and election" of God should be, not only "sure" and certain to ourselves, but it should be manifest to others. This, I believe, is the meaning of the exhortation, "Make your calling and election sure." (2 Pet. i. 10.) Whilst ignorant of the condition of others, *we ought, each one of us, to know his* own condition before

*God.* We must know whether we have peace with God or not. We must know whether we believe our sins forgiven or not. And if we do not believe them forgiven, we cannot have peace with God; for there can be no peace as long as there is an unsettled account between us and Him.

I do not say that no one who has not peace with God, is a Christian. Some hold this opinion: I do not. On the contrary, I believe there are many who have not peace with God, who are true Christians—who love the Lord Jesus, and who exhibit much devotedness of heart and life. But, let me say, such persons *are not intelligent Christians.* They want instruction as to the value and perfection of the work of Christ *on their behalf.* They want clearer views as to the blessings which are theirs *in him.* Thus they rob Christ of his glory, and they rob themselves of that joy, which is their privilege and their portion *in Christ.*

Each one present, let me repeat, ought to know for himself whether he is in Christ; and being in him, or having believed in him for the forgiveness of sins, he should find his "joy and peace in believing," the spring of a holy and obedient life. His thoughts would thus be drawn away from a fruitless poring over his own shortcomings and fluctuating experiences, and would be set on the Lord himself, as an object worthy of his grateful and most fervent affections. Enjoying the blessedness of acceptance with God, his heart would be led out in the service of his Saviour, and his talents devoted to the advancement of his kingdom amongst men.

I submit to you, my friends, that this precious *doctrine* that we are privileged to walk with God in

the enjoyment of *a present forgiveness*, is worthy of more prominence than it obtains. Is not all thanksgiving and praise to be rendered upon the principle that the offerer knows he is accepted? Must not he who has been separated from God by sin, have been brought back and reconciled, before there can be any fellowship between them? Do we not learn from that well-known passage in the fourth of John's Gospel, that if I be a "true worshipper," I must worship God as a "*Father?*" And surely if I worship God as a *Father*, I must know that I have become *His child.*

Again: are not the precepts of the New Testament based on the same principle—that those to whom they are addressed, knew their forgiveness and acceptance in Christ? Are not the Epistles addressed to believers, to "saints," to those "who are sanctified in Christ Jesus," to the "faithful in Christ Jesus," to the "saints and faithful brethren in Christ"? Are not the instructions contained in them given on the assumption that those to whom they are addressed know they are forgiven? I submit to you with regard to other duties as well as worship, whether God ever expects a person to walk as His child *until he is His child?* Have you not observed how *the precepts* of the Epistles are not given until *the doctrines* have been unfolded? Thus, in the Epistle to the Romans, it is not until the twelfth chapter that the apostle beseeches them to devote themselves to the worship and service of God; and this exhortation is given on the ground of their knowing and enjoying "the mercies of God," which He had been unfolding, one after another, in rich succession. "I beseech you THEREFORE,

*brethren, by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Now, if this be the teaching of the Spirit of God, may I not suggest to you whether a great mistake is not made by those who preach *duties*, rather than *motives;* who dwell on *precepts* rather than *privileges;* who inculcate *obligations to be performed*, rather than set forth *the Gospel of the grace of God*, which, under the Spirit's power, imparts that life and love which *delight* in their performance? Do you not find that until the heart is softened with some sense of the love of God—until the conscience is brought under conviction of sin, and the awakened soul is led to rest in the pardoning grace of Christ, it is in vain that you look for the outflowings of a loving and devoted heart? Do you not find that you may dwell on the duty of attending meetings, of separating from the world, of practising self-denial—that you may issue minutes, advices, recommendations, and admonitions till you are tired—you cannot allure, or argue, or alarm the natural mind of the unconverted into the obedience of Christ? All anticipation of witnessing any true practical Christianity amongst Friends or others, is utterly vain, until a radical change takes place within, under the quickening and transforming power of a believed Gospel.

I would earnestly urge the trial of another course of action. Aim first at "the renewing of the mind." Let the heart be set right, and other things will then follow in their right place. Set forth those wondrous truths which are found to break down and subdue *the most* hardened sinner. Set forth the love of

God, as manifested in the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and you will find to your joy that the Spirit will acknowledge your labours, and rest upon them. "We love him," says the Apostle, "because he first loved us." And it is believing in that love, which is the source of all true devotedness of heart, and holiness of life. According to the Divine economy, practical Christianity is only the result of a true-hearted reception of its glorious truths. Man is first to be a receiver from God. He is to receive pardon, peace, and eternal life; and *then*, under a sense of these great blessings, the natural impulse of his renewed affections will lead him to yield to the Lord a total surrender of all that he is and has.

There is another point on which I wish to say a few words. It is one on which it especially becomes us to speak with deep reverence. I mean, respecting the operations of the Holy Spirit. If I be mistaken in any thing which I may say, I shall be thankful to be set right.

It appears to me, that want of clearness on this subject sometimes exists from not distinguishing between His offices and operations *before* and *after* conversion, and from not recognising His relative position towards *the believer* and *the unbeliever*; applying therefore to the one, that which is applicable only to the other.

The operations of the Holy Spirit are so spoken of by our blessed Lord in the third chapter of John, that we must not attempt to define or explain what we are *there* taught is beyond our knowledge. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hear-

est the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But although we here learn that *the mode* of the Spirit's operation is mysterious and not cognisable to the human mind, *the fact* is unambiguously stated, that we must become the subjects of His quickening power, or we shall never enter the kingdom of God.

Without, therefore, pretending to be wise above that which is written, it will, I apprehend, be generally admitted, that the office of the Holy Spirit *previous* to conversion is to bring to Christ—to produce conviction of sin—to create a sense of want —to open the understanding to understand the Scriptures, and to reveal Christ to the soul as the only one that can meet its need. It will also, I should think, be as freely admitted, that in effecting this great change—in turning the sinner from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, it is especially by truths which relate to *sin and salvation from sin,* that the Spirit works. But after this change has been effected, is there not a wide range of blessed and glorious truth connected with the ways, and character, and purposes of God, and with the instruction of His people, which is intended as food for the new-born soul, but which is utterly inapplicable to him who continues an impenitent unbeliever?

And as to the relative position of the Spirit to *the unbeliever* and *the believer,* while He is said to strive with *the sinner,* and to act on him in drawing him to Christ, He is expressly said to come and dwell in *the believer,* as his Teacher, Comforter, *and Guide.* Let us examine a few passages which,

I apprehend, will clearly establish the distinction which I have made.

Let me remind you, how the Spirit is spoken of as "*the Spirit of promise*," which was to be given to some, and to dwell in them, while others received him not. Thus in the fourteenth of John, the Lord Jesus says of the Father—"He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the *world cannot receive*, because it seeth him not." (16, 17.) Here is a plain distinction drawn between some who should receive the gift of the Spirit, and others who would remain strangers to this precious gift.

Peter calls on the multitude on the day of Pentecost to "repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and they should *receive the gift* of the Holy Ghost." In the fifth of Acts likewise, he speaks of "the Holy Ghost, whom God *hath given* to them that obey Him." (verse 32.) Paul, in the third of Galatians, where he is vindicating the doctrines of grace, inquires—"*Received ye* the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (ver. 2.) When the Lord Jesus also, in the seventh of John, speaks of the blessings which were to flow from the gift of the Spirit, it is written—"This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him *should receive*." (ver 39.)

Now do not these passages clearly and plainly make the distinction to which I have referred, between the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the believer and the unbeliever? Do they not clearly establish the doctrine that the Holy Spirit dwells only in those who are regenerate through faith in the atoning blood of the Lamb.

Observe also, Scripture does not speak merely of *the influence* of the Spirit on believers, but it speaks of Him as *dwelling in them.* This is one of the characteristics of this Gospel dispensation—this dispensation of the Spirit, as it may properly be called—a dispensation, when the Holy Ghost is not merely sent down to act on the subject of His operations, but *to dwell in the Church as His temple.* Let us glance at a few beautiful texts which clearly present this view.

In the times of Israel, God made the Tabernacle and the Temple His dwelling-place in the midst of His people; but now, since the Jewish economy, in consequence of Israel's sin and apostacy, has given place to another order of things, God's dwelling-place is in the Church, as it is said in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "In whom ye also are builded together, for *an habitation of God through the Spirit.*" (ch. ii. 22.) "Know ye not," says the Apostle to the Corinthians, "that ye are *the temple of God,* and that the Spirit of God *dwelleth* in you." (1 Cor.. iii. 16.) And again, in the sixth chapter, "Know ye not that your body is *the temple* of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God." (ver. 19.) These passages *do not apply to the world.* God could not dwell in an unclean and unsanctified house. The house must be purified before He will dwell in it. And so it must be with our own selves. We must be sanctified by the blood of Christ, before the Holy Spirit comes and takes up His abode in us. For, let us remember, there is a sanctification *by the blood of Christ,* as well as a sanctification *by the Holy Spirit.* We *learn this* in the tenth of Hebrews, where it is

said, "We are sanctified [not by the Spirit—a truth which we find elsewhere, but] *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ*, once for all." (ver. 10.) And again, in the twenty-sixth of Acts, we read of "them which are sanctified *by faith that is in me*." (ver. 18.)

That *the cleansing* precedes *the anointing*, we learn also in the beautiful typical illustrations of the ceremonial law. Thus in the twenty-ninth of Exodus, we find the person of the priest was first to be cleansed—to be "washed with water;" *afterwards* he was to be anointed with oil. The oil, figuratively representing the Holy Spirit, was not to be applied till after the cleansing process had been submitted to. And still more strikingly in the fourteenth of Leviticus, we find how the application of the blood is directed as *preceding* the typical anointing of the Spirit. The blood of the offering was first to be put upon the right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot, as representing, I presume, the mind, the actions, and the movements—in other words, the whole person; and *after* the blood was thus applied, the anointing with oil followed in like manner.

If, then, the gift of the Spirit is consequent upon believing in Christ, whose atoning blood has opened for us a new and living way unto the Father, how are we to regard the pretensions of those who lay claim to the indwelling, teaching, and guidance of the Spirit, and yet confessedly reject the sacrificial character of the death of Christ, and deny the great fundamental truths of redemption? Is it not obvious they sadly deceive themselves? If you unite in this view, may I not suggest, in the retrospect of the past, whether it is not incumbent upon

Friends to see that more correct views are diffused upon this, as upon the other subjects which I have brought before you?

I feel specially interested on this subject, because I believe the true doctrine of the Spirit—which I should rejoice to see more fully, and clearly, and practically held by Christians in general—is much damaged and disparaged by being associated with unscriptural views.

If the blessings to be enjoyed by the Church, consequent on the gift of the Holy Ghost, were to be more than an equivalent for the departure of the Lord himself, (see John xvi. 7,) how little, must we not confess, are those blessings realized by the Church at large! How inconceivably great must be our common loss! Are not deadness, and worldliness, and formalism, the necessary result of not living under the Spirit's quickening, and guiding, and elevating power? If this be so, why should not Friends, by a more open proclamation of the whole counsel of God—both as to the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost—be the happy instruments of recalling a failing Church to a sense of one of her greatest privileges?*

One other point let me briefly hint at—the character of the age in which we live. Opinions vary

* If we examine the narrative of the ministry of the Apostles as contained in the Acts, we shall find that in preaching to the unconverted, Christ, and not the Spirit, was the subject of their testimony. Peter, indeed, on the day of Pentecost, refers to the outpouring of the Spirit as predicted by Joel; but it is as accounting for the miraculous gift of the Holy Ghost conferred upon *the disciples*. The death and resurrection of Christ is the grand theme on which they dwell; and as they preached *him*, the Spirit blessed *the word* to the hearers, and sealed it with quickening power.

much respecting it. Some imagine and speak as if we were on the borders of a golden age. They have confidence in the march of intellect and the progress of enlightenment. Others, on the contrary, look forward with fear and painful apprehensions as to the results of the agencies which are at work. Instead of the spread of truth and holiness, and the acknowledgment of God in all its ways, they apprehend the world—although becoming more elegant, polished, and refined—is growing in pride and independence of God, and in hostility to Christ. They see streams of poison and infidelity poured forth with increasing volume from those quarters, which ought

Thus, it is said, as Peter preached the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ, "The Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word." (Acts x. 44.)

The Gospel is to be preached to the world—to the unconverted; (Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47;) but preaching the Spirit as the prominent subject-matter of testimony, is not preaching the Gospel. Preaching the Gospel, is proclaiming the "glad tidings" of salvation through faith in Christ, and this preaching of Christ the Holy Spirit accompanies with quickening power. The doctrine of the Spirit is for the instruction of the believer, who, being indwelt by the Holy Ghost, should live and move under the Spirit's power and guidance, as the element of his moral being.

I should like to suggest as a matter for consideration, whether there is not a deficiency in modern preaching in not giving due prominence to the resurrection of Christ? Paul's ministry is thus described—"He preached unto them Jesus and *the resurrection*." (Acts xvii. 18.) "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," must ever form the basis of all true Gospel preaching; but the resurrection of Christ is intimately and inseparably connected with it; for the resurrection was God's attestation that the vicarious death of the victim had been accepted—that the debt was paid—the ransom complete. "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." His resurrection is the triumphant proof that the claims of God, as the God of righteousness, had been met, and that, in the language of Peter, "our sins," which he "his own self bare in his own body on the tree," had been for ever put away

to be springs for the diffusion of evangelical truth - Ritualism on the one hand, and on the other, free thinking, which denies the inspiration of Scripture, and the Deity and atonement of Christ, are sapping the foundations of Christian faith. Many things lead to the opinion that a time of trial and sifting is at hand. Last week I had the privilege of attending two prophetic clerical meetings, where there may have been about two hundred present, comprising many of the most spiritual of the clergy of Ireland; and in all that number there was not one who opposed the view that was freely expressed, that, judging from the Scripture testimony as to the closing scenes of the present age, we are compelled to the conclusion that a worse time is approaching. With this view I acknowledge I am strongly impressed. If it be correct, I ask, Are your members prepared for such a sifting? Are they established in the truth? Are they anchored on the Rock? They may be little exposed to the insidious workings of sacerdotal assumption, which, throughout Great Britain, is undermining the principles of the Reformation; but are they "thoroughly furnished," as Paul says to Timothy, from the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which Scripture unfolds—so built on the sure foundation, that they can stand the shock with which a fresh and more daring outburst of infidelity may assail them?

I would now conclude with a suggestion of a practical nature.

I rejoice to find that Bible Classes have recently sprung up amongst Friends in various parts of Eng-

land. From them may be anticipated the happiest results. God will assuredly bless those who make the Scriptures the subject of their prayerful study and meditation. Scripture pronounces *that* man blessed, whose "delight is in the law of the Lord," and who doth meditate therein day and night. (Psalm i. 2.)

The Lord says, "Search the Scriptures." (John v. 39.) The Yearly Meeting, in its becoming zeal, adds a word, and says, "Let them be diligently searched."* What is meant by this—"*diligently searched*"? Surely the mere reading of a chapter of the Scriptures after breakfast, is not "*diligently searching*" them. This habit may degenerate, like other practices, into a mere form. It is not treating the Scriptures with the respect which they deserve, nor with the attention which they demand, to merely read a portion, then lay the book aside, and dismiss the subject. This is not enough. There is no sacramental virtue in listening to so many words, even though the words of inspiration. The truths which the words convey, must be allowed to enter the soul; and no human mind can duly take in the profound truths contained in many parts of Scripture whilst read continuously, portion after portion.†

Would it not be well, in addition, at suitable times, to read a short portion, and to meditate on it —to commune together over it—to consider how it bears on us? Would it not be better often to take

* See General Epistle, 1720.

† I trust no one will misapply this observation, as discouraging the reading of the Scriptures in our families. Whilst encouraging the private and social examination of them, I rejoice in the privilege of this practice.

a single verse, and to seek for the teachings of th Spirit in opening it, that the instructions containe in it may be lodged in the heart, and become, as were. a part of ourselves.

Why should not meetings for thus searching th Scriptures become universal? Why should the not be held once or twice every week, wherever tw or three could come together? If held in th spirit of faith and prayer, the Lord's presence wou doubtless be known; for meeting in such a way, ar for such an object, we might rely on the fulfilmer of the promise—"Where two or three are gathere together in my name, there am I in the midst them."

But I would further add, why should there n be such a daily searching of the Scriptures in ever family? If we are really desirous of being taugl of the Lord, might we not look for the grace of th Spirit specially on such occasions? Perhaps would be objected, that there would be a danger lapsing into unprofitable discussions. Doubtless might be so. We are surrounded with dangers every hand. Is there not a danger in places worship of thinking of *earthly* instead of *heaven* things? But should we, on that account, recommer persons to stay away? Why should not subjecti to the Spirit of God be known when searching th Scriptures, as well as at other times?

Does any one inquire what warrant we have f such a course of procedure? I might addu many reasons for it; but it may be sufficient to ref such an inquirer to Deut. vi. 6, 7, where we read: "These words which I command thee this da *shall be* in thine heart, and thou shalt *teach th*

*diligently* unto thy children, and *shalt talk of them* when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Is not this a warrant for the diligent searching of the Scriptures in the family and social circle? Nay more: might I not add—Is not the neglect of it, disobedience to the plain precept of Holy Writ?

I believe those who have not had experience of this united and prayerful examination of Scripture, have no idea of the benefit and blessing to be derived from such an engagement. Each present on such occasions, may contribute his quota to the common profit, and thus a vast enlargement in the knowledge of divine things may be the result.

One benefit I would acknowledge to have derived from such meetings. I have returned from them at times humbled under a sense of my own ignorance. And it is a good thing to be thus driven to our Bibles and our closets, with more earnest desires to learn immediately from the Lord. Thus the social searching of the Scriptures incites to the private study of them, and the private study of them, in return, fits for the social engagement, and renders it more delightful.

It is very desirable that such meetings be conducted in the spirit of liberty, as well as of deep reverence, and that all present take part, by reading each a verse in succession to the end of a paragraph. Then, what has been read, might be examined in detail.

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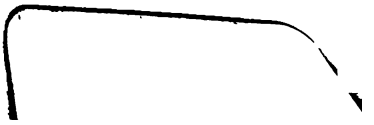

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